

Lexemes Expressing “Goodness” in English Household Tales

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Abstract:

This article discusses the semantic features of lexemes that represent “goodness” in English household tales. The main goal of the research is to study in depth the lexemes common in the household tales of English folklore from the semantic point of view. On the basis of research and analysis of examples, a conclusion is made about the semantic aspects of lexemes expressing “goodness” in folk tales.

Keywords: household tales, lexemes, goodness, kindness, bravery, fairness, folklore, semantic analysis.

Introduction

Tales are one of the oldest and most widespread genres, occupying a prominent place in world folklore. The oldest, largest genre of oral folk art, equally interesting for young and old, is considered a fairy tale. Folk tales help us understand the difference between goodness and evil, justice and injustice, crookedness and correctness, and many other concepts much easier. By listening to them, children develop good qualities and try to imitate positive characters, distinguishing between good and evil. English folk tales include tales based on events that occur directly in everyday life, and they are called household tales. They educate people with the concepts of being faithful, conscientious, free-spirited, perceptive, strong-willed and intelligent. One of the most important aspects of those tales is their educational value, the vitality of meaning and conflict, the richness of satire and humor, and the conciseness of the plot. This type of tales are distinguished from magical tales according to such features.

Materials and methods

American folklorist Stith Thompson is the author of “The Motif-Index of Folk-Literature,” which indexes folktales by type and shows motifs, the smallest elements of folklore, for folklorists. In his work “The Folktale” S. Thompson divides fairy tales into three main groups: animal tales, simple folk tales, and funny tales [1]. The largest group of fairy tales, ordinary folk tales, are divided into magical or miraculous tales, religious stories, romantic stories, and stories about the foolish Ogre. In its classification, we also see that ordinary folk tales of everyday life constitute a large number.

In world literature, the classic collection of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, “Children and Household Tales” [2] (“Kinder und Hausmärchen”), mainly includes household tales, and we can say that this is the only and largest collection of household tales in the world folklore.

The Russian linguist Y.V. Mamanova, who studied household tales, also researched the words present in English household tales from a semantic and cognitive perspective in her research. According to the researcher, “household tales have not yet been the subject of special linguistic or literary research. In our opinion, when considering fairy tales, attention should be paid to those that have a everyday plot. In such tales, the national color and centuries-old experience of the people are most clearly manifested” [3]. In addition, he emphasized that folk tales are one of the most convenient for studying the character of a people, because due to their stability and conservatism, they preserve the language of an entire people and pass it onto generations. At the same time, he also explained that real people act in folk tales, but in unrealistic situations, sometimes embodying the dream of an entire people, such as finding happiness, mocking the stupidity of a rich man, etc.

Results and discussions

It should be noted that folk tales have long educated people, especially the younger generation, in the spirit of humanity, love of homeland, truthfulness and honesty, hard work, courtesy, and humility. Since we are talking about lexemes expressing “goodness” in household tales, it is appropriate to give a more complete definition of this concept. In English, the lexeme “**goodness**” is defined as follows in the Cambridge English dictionary:

*“**Goodness** – the personal quality of being morally good; used to express any strong emotion, especially surprise; the quality of being morally right and admirable.”* [4]

The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives about 58 synonyms and antonyms for the word “goodness” and explains it as follows:

“1 the quality or state of being good; 2 used interjectionally or in phrases especially to express mild surprise or shock (oh, my goodness); 3 the nutritious, flavorful, or beneficial part of something.” [5]

*“Wallace Maxwell had his father’s courage and patriotism, and he had won the love of a girl, Mary Morrison, poor as himself, but endowed with beauty and **goodness**, so that all who knew them thought them a pair well worthy of one another”* [6]

The lexeme **kindness** in English household tales expresses the following meanings:

1: the quality or state of being kind: treating people with kindness and respect 2: a kind deed: favor: They did me a great kindness. 3 archaic: affection

The Macmillan English Dictionary defines the lexeme **kindness** as kind behaviour, or kind feelings; kind action. This lexeme is found in many places in folktales.

*“Poor Dick hardly knew how to behave himself for joy. He begged his master to take what part of it he pleased, since he owed it all to his **kindness**.”* (“Whittington and his cat”)

It is worth noting that the lexeme **fair**, which expresses the meanings of and justice, honest, is used in many places in English household tales. Fair and just means “marked by impartiality and

honesty: free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism” or “treating someone in a way that is right or reasonable, or treating a group of people equally and not allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment”. [7]

“Lady Mary was young, and Lady Mary was fair. She had two brothers, and more lovers than she could count.” (“Mr.Fox”)

The lexeme **decent** (dasent) in household tales are used widely. It can be given in Old English or in dialects as *dasent*. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines this lexeme as follows:

1: marked by moral integrity, kindness, and goodwill; 2a: conforming to standards of propriety, good taste, or morality.

*“I’m not without another buideal, and you may pass it round while myself finishes what the **dasent** man left me.” (Jack the Cunning Thief”)*

In English household tales, the lexeme **generous**, which expresses the meaning of open-handed, appears in many places and is defined as “willing to give money, help, kindness, etc., especially more than is usual or expected.”

*“Several years elapsed, and the lady was paying a visit to some friends miscellaneous legends in the country, when the conversation frequently turned upon a friend of the house, who was described as one of the most charming, **generous**, and beneficent of mankind.” (“The Wooden Legs”)*

The lexeme **brave** in English folk tales expresses the meanings of courageous, fearless and is one of the most important qualities given to fairy tale heroes. In some tales, this lexeme is also used in relation to girls. For example, in English fairy tales and legends such as “Earl Mar’s Daughter”, “Nix Nought Nothing”, “Farmer Hewlett’s Amends”, “Crawls”, we can see the use of the lexeme brave to describe girls.

*“But of them all, the **bravest** and most **gallant**, was a Mr. Fox, whom she met when she was down at her father’s country-house”. (Mr.Fox”)*

The lexeme **courage** is used to express noble qualities such as courage, bravery, and manliness. This lexeme has various definitions in English dictionaries. For example, in the Macmillan English Dictionary, it is explained as “*the ability to do something that you know is right or good, even though it is dangerous, frightening, or very difficult*”. In the following excerpt from an English fairy tale, it is used to describe the mental and emotional state of the hero, that is, his courage.

“He thought that this wagon must be going to the fine town of London; so he took courage, and asked the waggoner to let him walk with him by the side of the wagon.” (“Whittington and his cat”)

In English household tales, words such as *goodness, kindness, meekness, truth, fairness, wisdom, friendship, sincerity, help, justice*, and many others are often used. In folk tales, noble qualities such as bravery, courage, and valor are glorified, and many lexemes express these concepts. There are a lot of lexemes expressing “goodness” in household tales of English folklore.

Conclusion

In conclusion, since everyday tales, which are a common type of folk tales, are taken from life, each listener or reader of them searches for his own life and tries to see his own destiny. In household tales, the issues of mastering a profession, acquiring knowledge, doing good, and fighting evil are present. Also, respecting the elderly and the younger, appreciating parents, helping widows and the poor, and other good deeds are important. Furthermore, in those tales there are cases of the victory of goodness over evil, the hero who has faced injustice overcomes difficulties and achieves justice, as well as the heroes win with their goodness. In addition, the characters of this type of tale are distinguished from the characters of other types of tales by their wisdom and eloquence.

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